(15)

I came to scoff ---

When one witnesses a dialogue between a visitor and Shri Maharaj over a period, one is astonished at the range of questions which are asked - many of them shockingly naive - and the spontaneity and the ease with which the answers seem to come from Shri Maharaj. The questions and answers are both translated as accurately as possible. The answers in Marathi - which is the only language Shri Maharaj is fluent in - would naturally be based on the Marathi words used in the translation of the questions. Shri Maharaj in his answers makes such a clever use of the Marathi words used in the question, either by way of puns or by a slight change in the words producing a totally different meaning. The exact effect of such words could never be brought out in extempore translations. Shri Maharaj frankly admits that it is always in the lighter vein that he uses the Marathi language in such a way because the level of the questions clearly shows the mental level of the questioners, and the intent behind them. If the questioner treats the session as an entertainment albeit of a superior kind, Shri Maharaj might join in it, in the absence of better company!

Among the visitors there is occasionally an unusual type of person who has a very keen mind but is so burdened by an undercurrent of skepticism - perhaps due to some earlier conditioning by persons for whom he had an innate sense of respect - that he would consider it below his intellectual dignity to assert that he has not only an open mind but an honest curiosity about the subject. Shri Maharaj, of course, quickly recognizes such a type, and then the conversation at once assumes a piquancy and a depth that leaves one literally stunned. One then recognizes at the intuitive perception what knowledge of Shri Maharaj says for the simple reason that such statements might not, if they are based on thought and logic - come out of the lips of great trained thinkers like the world-renowned philosophers but certainly not from the lips of a lower middle

class gentleman who frankly admits that the extent of his education is limited to primary education in Marathi! His talks will NOT be interspersed ~~liberally~~ by quotations, in Sanskrit, English or any other language. (If one of the visitors showed, quotes even a fairly familiar verse from Gita the Gita, he has to ask the person the Marathi translation of it: ~~what does it mean, he asks~~. What do the Sanskrit words mean, he asks.) His own intuitive apperception is his conviction and he needs no support of the words of any other personality. Whatever it may be, he says, ~~the~~ words would have appeared if he did not possess the one tiny 'capital' which every sentient being has, and that is, THAT which gives ~~him~~ sentience to a being.

One morning, one of the usual visitors brought with him a friend of his and introduced him to Shri Maharaj, as a man with a very keen intellect who would not take anything for granted and who would question anything before accepting it. Shri Maharaj said he was happy to meet such a person. The new visitor was a professor in Mathematics.

Shri Maharaj suggested that it would perhaps be best for the two of them to have a talk without any assumptions of any kind, right from the basic level. Would he like that? The visitor must have been most pleasantly surprised at this offer: he said he was delighted by the suggestion.

Shri M. - Now tell me, you who are sitting before me here and now. What exactly do you think of yourself?

Visitor - I am a male individual human being, thirty-two years old, with certain measurements, like certain opinions.

Shri M. - What was your image about yourself ten years ago? Same as it is now? And when you were ten years old? and when you were an infant? - AND, even before that? Did not your image about yourself change all the time?

Visitor - Yes - what I thought about myself as my identity has been changing all the time.

Shri M. – And yet, think! Is there not something (deep down) when you think about yourself that has NOT changed?

Visitor – Yes. There is, though I cannot specify what it is.

Shri M. – Is it not the simple sense of BEING, the sense of existing, the sense of consciousness? If you are not conscious, would your body exist for you? Would there be any world for you? Would there be any question of a God or a Creator?

Visitor – Yes, this is certainly something to ponder. But tell me, please, how do you see yourself?

Shri M. – I am THIS-I-AM – or, if you prefer, I am THAT-I-AM.

Visitor – I am sorry but I don't understand.

Shri M. – When you say "I think I understand", it is all wrong. When you say "I don't understand", that is absolutely the TRUTH. Let me make it simpler: I am the Conscious Presence – not this or that but the Conscious Presence, as such.

Visitor – Now, I was about to say, I think I understand. But you have already just said that that is wrong. You are not deliberately trying to get me confused, are you?

Shri M. – On the contrary, I am telling you the exact position. Objectively, I am all that appears in the mirror of my consciousness. Absolutely, I am THAT: I am the consciousness in which the world appears.

Visitor – I am afraid I don't see that: all I can see ~~but~~ is what appears before me.

Shri M. – Would you be able to see what appears before you, if you were not conscious? Is all existence therefore not purely objective inasmuch as you exist only in my consciousness and I in yours? Is it not clear, therefore, that our experience of one another is limited to an act of cognition in consciousness? In other words, is not what we call our existence merely in the mind of some one else, and therefore only conceptual? Ponder over this, too.

dream
volition
choice

Visitor – are you trying to tell me that we are all mere phantoms in the world? And what about the world itself? and all the events that occur?

Shri M. – Ponder over what I have said. Can you find a flaw in it? The physical body which one generally identifies oneself with is only the physical constituent for the breath – Prana – the life force, and consciousness brilliant the Prana/Consciousness. What is the physical body? Only a carcass! It is only because the consciousness has mistakenly identified itself with its physical covering that the individual comes into existence.

Visitor – Now you and I are two separate individuals who have to live and work in this world along with millions of others, of course. How do you view me?

Shri M. – I view you in this world exactly as you view yourself in your dream. Does that satisfy you. In a dream, whilst your body is resting in your bed, you have created a whole world, parallel to the what you call the 'real' world, in which there are people, including yourself. How do you view yourself in your dream? In the waking state the world emerges (why? because of ignorance) and takes you into what I would call a waking dream state. The dream world appears very real, does it not? How do you know that this world that you call 'real' is also not a dream? – a dream from which you must awaken yourself by seeing the false as false, the unreal as unreal, the transient as transient which can 'exist' only in time – space, and then you are in Reality; then you see the world as 'living', as a phenomenal dream ~~confin~~ within the periphery of sensorial perception in time – space, and the supposed volitional freedom.

~~Visito~~ Now, what you call an individual why don't you have an analytical examination of it? – An individual, of course, after giving up all existing mental conditioning ~~that~~ and preconceived ideas? and what do

you find? — the body, merely a physical construct for the life force - Prana - which together constitutes a sort of psycho-somatic apparatus, to produce and what does this "individual" do? Other than producing illusory images and interpretations? And, further, this particular "individual sentient being itself" can "exist" only as an object in the consciousness that cognizes it!

Visitor: Do you really mean to say that you see no difference between a dream dreamt by me and living in this world?

Shri M. - You have had quite a lot already to cogitate and meditate upon. Are you sure you wish to proceed?

Visitor - I am used to large doses of serious study, and I have no doubt you are too. I would be most grateful indeed if we could proceed.

Shri M. - Very well. When you were in deep sleep, as I think I have said before, did the phenomenal world exist for you? Can you not intuitively and naturally KNOW the your state - your original BEING - before this body/consciousness condition intruded upon you unasked, unaided? In that state, were you conscious of your "existence"? Certainly not.

The universal manifestation only in consciousness and the "awakened" person has his centre of seeing in the Absolute. In the original state of pure BEING, consciousness arises like a wave on an expanse of water, and in consciousness the world appears and disappears. All these the waves arise and disappear, the expanse of water remains. Before all beginnings, after all endings, I AM. Whatever happens, "I" must be there to witness it.

It is not that the world does not "exist". Exist it does but merely as an

appearance in consciousness : the totality of the known manifested in the infinity of the unknown unmanifested ; the temporal, finite and sensorially perceptible wave in the timeless, spaceless, imperceptible ocean. What begins must end. What appears must disappear. The duration of appearance is a matter of relativity, but the principle is that whatever is subject to time must end, and is therefore not real.

Now, can you appreciate that in this living dream we are still asleep, that all that is cognisable is ~~part of~~ contained in this phantasy of living, and that the one, who when cognising this objectified world considers himself an entity apart from that which is cognised, is on the contrary, very much an integral part of the very same hypothetical world ?

Also, consider : we ~~also~~ seem to be convinced that we live a life of our own, according to our own wishes and hopes and ambitions, by according to our own plan and design, through our own efforts - ~~are~~ is that really so ? Or are we being dreamed and lived without volition, totally as puppets - exactly as in a personal dream ?! But, never forget, that ~~as~~ just as the world exists, albeit as an appearance, the dreamed figures too, in either dream, do have content - they are what the dreamer-subject is. That is why I say : Relatively I am not, but the manifested universe is MY SELF.

Visitor : I think, I am beginning to get the whole idea.

Shri M. - Is not thinking itself a notion in split-mind? Thought is absent in seeing things with a whole-mind. When you think you understand, you don't. When you ~~understand~~ apperceive directly, there is no thinking.

Visitor - "Good Heavens - this seems to be a new dimension that you are presenting."

Shri M. - Well, I don't know about a new dimension but you have expressed it very well. It could indeed be said to be a fresh direction of ~~measurement~~ of vision - inasmuch as by avoiding thought and ~~seeing~~ appreciating things directly, conceptualising and interpretation is avoided. In other words, seeing with whole mind means the absence of the apparent seer.

The visitor then got up, paid his respects to Shri Maharaj with considerably more articulation and sincerity than what was shown on his arrival. He looked into Shri Maharaj's eyes and smiled. As he was about to leave, Shri Maharaj asked him why he was smiling. He said he was reminded of a saying in English: They came to scoff, and remained to pray!